

Twins – Years Apart

Everyone says it. Our family, friends and acquaintances are in agreement – our two middle children look just like each other. They could pass for twins, except for the fact that Sammie is almost 5 and Disney is 2½ – so twins years apart, you might say. Don't believe me? Nothing like photographic evidence...



For Those Born Between 1930-1979

The following words of wisdom came to me in an email forward. However, I have to disagree with some of it since I was born near the end of the window and I did have some of the things growing up that the email says I would not have had. So, I put my personal comments about this email forward in *italics*.

THOSE BORN 1930-1979

READ TO THE BOTTOM FOR QUOTE OF THE MONTH BY JAY LENO . IF YOU DON'T READ ANYTHING ELSE—VERY WELL STATED

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED the 1930's, 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's!! *(I can barely get credit for surviving the 70's. After all, I only experienced the 70's for a year and a half!)*

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant. *(Well, ok, maybe everyone reading this survived some of that, but that doesn't make it right, of course!)*

They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn't get tested for diabetes .

Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no child- proof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. Not to mention the risks we took hitchhiking. *(that is definitely before my time. I've never hitchhiked. And the only people I know who have are either deceased or over the age of 50!)*

As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats , seat belts or air bags. *(Ok, I remember this – every kid I knew whose parents had a station wagon would ride in the back of it for long trips, no seatbelts. I think kids should be buckled up, but I think the whole booster / car seat until they're 8 years old is just plain ridiculous! Ah, the effects those lobbyists have on Congress is purely amazing, isn't it?)*

Riding in the back of a pick up on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle.

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank Kool-

aid made with sugar, but we weren't overweight because WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING! *(Well, a few people I went to school with DO have heart problems, but...)*

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day. And we were OK.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo 's, X-boxes, no video games at all *(umm, I beg to differ. My generation had Atari, Intellivision, the Commodore, the Tandy, the original Nintendo, and even some hand-held electronic games)*, no 150 channels on cable, no video movies *(again, not true. I remember the day my family got our VCR. I was worried my big sister would be mad because she was at a sleepover when we got it and the whole event was so exciting. We rushed right out to the video store to rent a video. But all the good ones seemed to be in BETA, not VHS...)* or DVD's, no surround-sound or CD's *(but we had records, cassette tapes, and walkmans!)*, no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or chatrooms.....

WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. *(Nor did the gum we swallowed stay in our tummies for seven years – hehe)*

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it

would happen, we did not poke out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them!

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!! *(Nowadays, we'd be lucky to get enough kids to have to turn them away, not that we would, but the point is, many kids are busy playing video games or causing trouble... or their parents are just too busy to let them commit to anything extracurricular)*

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law! *(Nowadays kids are charged as adults, so parents aren't often given the option to decide what's best for their own child!)*

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever!

The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

If YOU are one of them CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated so much of our lives for our own good.

While you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave (and lucky) their parents were.

Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn't it?!

The quote of the month is by Jay Leno:

'With hurricanes, tornadoes, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding, severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks, are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?'

For those that prefer to think that God is not watching over us...go ahead and delete this.

For the rest of us...pass this ON!

Ok, I'm not a big fan of passing on email forwards... But this one entertained me, so do with it what you will, and remember that my contributions are the ones in italics, so thanks for reading my commentary!

MISSING

I like to read the news stories on dailyherald.com – probably because they have much more interesting news than my local newspaper. But hey, that's not a complaint since more interesting news = more crime to write about. But I grew up in the Chicago area, so when there are interesting stories on dailyherald.com, I know where the town is they're talking about, which is another reason why I frequent the site. Today's edition had an interesting (but sad) story:

Naperville police are desperately searching for a missing 12-year-old child who allegedly took the keys to his family car and left the home.

Cmdr. Dave Hoffman of the Naperville Police Department said the child is 5-feet, 8-inches tall, about 140 pounds, has wavy brown hair and brown eyes. He is believed to be wearing gray

cargo pants and a white T-shirt and a green winter Army jacket.

Hoffman said the boy allegedly took the keys sometime after 2 a.m., left his house, backed the vehicle out of the garage.

Hoffman added the boy also has a history of sleep walking, but has no history of taking the family vehicle for rides when sleep walking.

The vehicle missing is described as a light blue, 2008 Hyundai Santa Fe with an Illinois registration number of A744198.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Naperville Police Department through 9-1-1 or contact your local law enforcement agency.

Hopefully this kid is going to be alright. Does a 12-year-old know how to drive, especially in his sleep? At that age, it's quite possible that he decided to run away also, but he does have a history of sleepwalking. The article fails to mention how they KNOW he took the keys and left – was there a witness? I know where Naperville is; in fact, I used to live there. It's a nice town, but it's a dangerous world. I am hoping they find this kid safe and sound. It's a sad story, but let's hope there's a happy ending. I know some of you loyal readers know people who sleepwalk and have interesting tales – let's hear them!

**UPDATE* – The kid was found safe and sound at O'Hare airport. Apparently he was not sleepwalking but was trying to run away. How a 12-year-old was able to navigate the expressways to get to O'Hare I don't know – but thank goodness he is safe.*

So THAT Explains My Crazy 9-Year-Old!

Our oldest child was always “the good one”. She was responsible, logical, creative, and very helpful with her 3 younger siblings. A few months ago, things changed. Not a day went by when she didn’t have a tantrum or when she was the worst behaved kid of the day. What has happened to our sweet little girl, we wondered? Are these teenage hormone changes kicking in, and will we not see any relief until she’s grown up? With a high-maintenance spitfire 4-year-old, a toddler deep within the throes of the “terrible twos” and a baby in the house, how would we ever make it, especially without the help of our “model” kid?

I was so frustrated with her behavior that I did a simple google search for ‘moody 9 year old’. What I found was a HUGE relief in the form of a very informative article that helped to define the behavior of a child going through this particular transition period. Most people aren’t aware of any traditional behavior problems in the average 9-year-old child, but this article described my daughter to a “T” (and her name is Taylor, haha) But seriously, the article was a huge load off! Not only did it totally describe the alarming behavior changes, but it also gave survival tips for the rest of the family. Coincidentally, ever since I read the article, her behavior has improved and she’s pretty much back to normal. But if we should have a relapse or if someone else does a search for ‘moody 9 year old” and they’re led to my blog, here is a copy of the helpful article:

From

https://www.informedfamilylife.org/2005/01/parenting_the_nine_year_old.html

This article by Rahima Baldwin Dancy on “Parenting the Nine Year Old” describes the developmental changes of the nine-

year-old child and how parents and Waldorf education meet this psychological stage. It first appeared in Mothering, Summer, 1989.

Parents of nine year olds often wonder, "What is happening to my child?" Children at this age can become very critical and argumentative, or very moody and withdrawn. Nightmares, irrational fears, headaches and stomachaches often arise. Some children feel as if no one at school likes them, or others become suddenly self-conscious about being rich, poor, or otherwise "different." Parents may be accused of being unfair or of not understanding, as the child rushes off and slams his or her door.

Searching for an explanation for the changes in behavior, parents sometimes blame a new teacher, a recent move, changes in the family such as separation or the birth of a sibling, or simply "growing pains". An understanding of what is actually taking place can help us avoid needless worry and provide the support and guidance that children need during this time.

What is Happening?

The special needs of the nine year old are the result of an important change in consciousness that marks the end of early childhood and the transition to a new developmental phase. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, states, "In the ninth year the child really experiences a complete transformation of its being, which indicates an important transformation of its soul-life and its bodily-physical experiences."

Earlier, before the age of five or so, the child has a dreamlike state of consciousness in which the outer world and inner experience end to flow together. Outer events are not "observed," but are deeply taken in through unconscious imitation. Whereas babies learn nearly everything through imitation, kindergarten-age children continue to imitate many aspects of their world, such as the movements of the teacher

or parent.

While the power of imitation is so strong, the child feels united with the world and experiences no sense of aloneness. But with the loss of this power around the age of nine, the child feels separated from the world. Something that was hidden and slumbering begins to awaken. Nine year olds suddenly have a strong experience of themselves as separate beings, with a new feeling of distance from the world and other people. This sense of self, first experienced around age two-and-a-half, recurs now in a much deeper way, as the inner emotional life of the child begins to develop.

Although children react differently to leaving the sweet, dreamlike world of early childhood, one response is nearly universal: children become more conscious of their surroundings. You will probably find that what was once passed by unnoticed is suddenly focused on and questioned. This awakening to the world may be met with quiet astonishment or sharp criticism, depending on the child's temperament.

A critical child may notice whether the statements people make are grounded in the real world or are a veneer. He or she may begin to question parents and teachers, wondering, "How do they know everything?" and, indeed, "Do they really know everything?" Something in the child is seeking reassurance that the authority of the adult will stand the test of quality, and that it carries an inner certainty.

In contrast, another child may become more withdrawn and start to look under the bed at night, or may have frequent stomachaches in response to this new sense of being alone. Parents whose children suddenly want to be alone often feel as if they are "losing" their children, as if the children no longer want to share their developing inner worlds. This is a time when intimations of mortality and death can enter a child's consciousness. Religious questions and concerns about good and evil may also emerge with the child's increased self-

awareness and sense of choice and responsibility.

Usually, within six months after the ninth birthday (and sometimes earlier), the children are profoundly aware of this new sense of separateness between the self and the outer world. As the "I" penetrates into awareness, children begin to experience themselves as self-contained beings. They often feel as though they are in a threshold situation, poised, as it were, on the cusp of their own destiny. A 70-year-old woman wrote of this time in her life: "In this year I had a significant I-experience. I had just come from school in the city and had to change trams. In this moment of waiting, the complete certainty came to me that now all of life lay before me and that I was the one that must travel it.

Essentially, the nine year old is experiencing his or her own identity-to become a separate individuality, able to confront the outer world. Ideally, the child comes through this difficult time with a sense of connection with his or her higher self, a kind of "knowing" that will remain even after the heightened awareness is integrated.

My son spent many difficult months in the throes of "the nine-year change." One night, as he popped out of bed for the third time, I had to muster great self-control to say, "What now?" "I'm glad I'm me!" he announced, radiating like the sun. He went on to explain, "It's just like the song "The Age of Not Believing." The words of the Disney song ran through my mind: "You must face the age of not believing, doubting everything you ever knew. Until at last you start believing, there's something wonderful in you." We all shared in his joy and thanked God that family life could once again return to normal.

Parenting Tips

What can parents do to help their child through this important turning point at age nine?

– Understanding what is happening will help both your child

and yourself as a parent. When both parents, or parents together with the teacher, consider a child and his real needs, it can help give the child balance. Be patient— this, too, shall pass. Ten is a wonderfully harmonious time between the crisis at age nine and adolescence, when the next intensifying of self-consciousness occurs.

– Be willing to let your child have her own inner emotional life. You can't "fix it." Honor her need for privacy or her sudden impatience with a younger sister. Be willing to let go and tolerate distance. Your relationship is changing and will improve again once alterations have been completed. Be nearby with understanding and reassurance that she is still loved.

– Share your thoughts with your child about things that go beyond the every-day affairs of life. But don't limit your child by providing "answers" or definitions that can't grow within the child when asked about things like God or death.

– Have faith in self-healing, in your child's ability to come through this phase. Support individual artistic activity that attracts your child (writing poetry, keeping a diary, drawing or painting, music).

– Support your child's interest in the world by providing opportunities to build things, visit a farm, plant a garden, do work in the real world. Encourage a connection with the plant and animal kingdoms and with simple human creative activities now before the child explores the world of technology, which is more appropriate for adolescence.

– Nourish your child with stories that illustrate the interconnectedness of life and the powers of fate and destiny. The story of Joseph and his coat of many colors has this element of the dream heralding his destiny and the patience he needed to see it manifest. In the curriculum of the Waldorf schools, the Old Testament stories are told in third grade because they mirror the inner state of the nine-year-old child. The creation story, for example, describes the child's own experience of leaving the paradisiacal realm of early childhood, acquiring new self-awareness, and with it the added dimensions of choice and increasing responsibility for one's

actions. In fourth grade the heroic tales of the Norse myths represent the exploits of the new ego in larger-than-life fashion. The Waldorf curriculum also introduces the child to the world through projects in house-building, farming, and the study of the plant and animal kingdoms, not as abstract sciences, but in relation to the human being.

– Recognize that the child needs to establish a new respect for adult authority that goes beyond the blind acceptance of the younger child. Parents can encourage this by honoring a child's new relationship with a teacher or other adults in his life. Steiner states, "What matters is that at this moment in life, the child can find someone—whether this be one person or possibly several persons is of less importance—whose picture it can carry through life." (3) Parents can also help themselves be this kind of authority by presenting a united front to the child and by both sitting down with the child when questions of discipline arise (single parents may want to bring in a teacher or other adult during this time).

The magnitude of the changes that a child of this age is going through can be better understood if you contemplate the differences between the child of seven and the child of twelve. The seven year old is light-hearted and always in movement. The limbs are active for learning (through touching, doing, walking the times tables, and so forth). In contrast, the head is relatively large and still dreamy. The seven year old is just beginning to get adult teeth. His or her emotions are easily influenced by impressions from the world, with tears changing to smiles relatively easily.

The twelve year old, on the other hand, has a head that is very awake for thinking and longer limbs which seem heavy, tired, and often awkward to control. There is a rich and sometimes over-powering inner emotional life; the older child brings a great deal more to each experience. Physically, the sexual organs are beginning to mature as the child enters puberty.

The nine-year-old is in the middle between the world of early childhood and the world of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes which you may observe in your nine-year-old child are the outer manifestations of the tremendous change in consciousness which is going on within the child's expanding inner world. By understanding the nature of these changes, we can better provide support in parenting the nine year old.

Awakening to the world and a new sense of self brings with it a new need: to understand the real world of everyday life, while at the same time long for intimations of something beyond ordinary life. As parents and teachers, our task is to become loving authorities for the growing child, sharing both a true picture of the world and a sense of our own inner striving.

Disney's Intervention

It's no secret that our formally sweet daughter Disney is in the throes of the 'terrible twos' right now. One minute she'll be snuggling... But the next minute, she'll be spitting, pinching, hitting, pulling hair, or one of the other horrible behaviors that define the 'terrible twos'. So the other night, we had some friends over for a game night – a bunch of adults sitting around the table snacking, talking and playing games, and the kids were kind of hyper. Attempting to calm them down, I suggested putting a movie on the big tv and letting them watch it downstairs, and so our two oldest laid down to watch it peacefully. Their baby brother went to bed without fuss, and all was well until Disney decided to wreak havoc upon her unsuspecting sisters. As they were laying down trying to watch the movie, she began sitting on them – spitting on them, pinching them, and basically just trying to

do her best to make their lives miserable for the moment. We separated the kids, and Disney came over to the adult's table to finish her special treat of root beer – and that's when it hit me – she was on a sugar high! Sure enough, after she chugged down her root beer, she began going for (and at a record pace) the gumballs from her Strawberry Shortcake gumball machine she had gotten for Valentine's Day. Some game night friends noticed this, and Cathy distracted her while John passed the gumball machine to Jamy, who passed it to me. I hid it under my shirt and stealthily (or so I thought) left the room with Dis at my heels...

I made it to the bathroom where I was able to stash the gumball machine without her noticing, and although she did ask about it, we were able to avoid fueling the two-year-old fire any further, and within an hour, she fell asleep. It only took 4 adults to stage a sugar intervention for our two-year-old, and thank goodness they did because too much sugar+terrible two's = horror for everyone!

So thanks everyone, for staging Disney's intervention – we all know it was for her and OUR own good!

I Will Survive

Here's a cute video that was a popular email forward in the infancy age of email forwards. I saw this one years ago, and it popped into my head today for some reason, so here you go... oh yeah, make sure you watch the whole thing!

And Your Favorite Muppet Is?

Recently I came across an interesting article about everyone's favorite comedians, the Muppets! I grew up watching the Muppets; whether it was on the various incarnations of their tv shows (The Muppet Show, Muppets Tonight, etc.), their feature films, Sesame Street, or even in their hilarious Muppets 3D attraction at Disney's Hollywood (formerly MGM) Studios in Florida. Here are some fun facts about 20 of the Muppets that you might not know:

1. Cookie Monster: Jim Henson drew some monsters eating various snacks for a General Foods commercial in 1966. The commercial was never used, but Henson recycled one of the monsters (the "Wheel-Stealer") for an IBM training video in 1967 and again for a Fritos commercial in 1969. By that time, he had started working on Sesame Street and decided this monster would have a home there.

2. Elmo: The way it's described by a Sesame Street writer, apparently this extra red puppet was just lying around. People would try to do something with him, but nothing really panned out. In 1984, puppeteer Kevin Clash picked up the red puppet and started doing the voice and the personality and it clicked – thus, Elmo was born.

3. Telly Monster was originally the Television Monster when he debuted in 1979. He was obsessed with TV and his eyes would whirl around as if hypnotized whenever he was in front of a set. After a while, producers started worrying about his influence on youngsters, so they changed him to make him the chronic worrier he is now.

4. Count von Count made his first appearance in 1972 and was

made out of an Anything Muppet pattern – a blank Muppet head that could have features added to it to make various characters. He used to be more sinister – he was able to hypnotize and stun people and he laughed in typical scary-villain-type fashion after completing a count of something and thunder and lightning would occur. He was quickly made more appealing to little kids, though. He is apparently quite the ladies' man – he has been linked to Countess von Backward, who loves to count backward; Countess Dahling von Dahling and Lady Two.

5. Kermit was “born” in 1955 and first showed up on “Sam and Friends,” a five-minute puppet show by Jim Henson. The first Kermit was made out of Henson’s mom’s coat and some ping pong balls. At the time, he was more lizard-like than frog-like. By the time he showed up on Sesame Street in 1969, though, he had made the transition to frog. There are rumors that he got the name Kermit from a childhood friend of Henson’s or a puppeteer from the early days of the Muppets, but Henson always refuted both of those rumors. Mental Floss: 15 reasons Mr. Rogers was the best neighbor ever

6. Real Swedish Chef Lars “Kuprik” Bäckman claims he was the inspiration for the Swedish Chef. He was on “Good Morning America,” he says, and caught Jim Henson’s eye. Henson supposedly bought the rights to the show’s recording and created the Swedish Chef (who DOES have a real name, but it’s not understandable). One of the Muppet writers, Jerry Juhl, says that in all of the years of working with Jim Henson on the Swedish Chef, he never heard that the character was based on a real person.

7. Animal: The Who’s Keith Moon may have inspired everyone’s favorite member of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem. This is speculation, but people who support the theory will point out that Jim Henson named one of the Fraggle Rock characters “Wembley,” which is the town where Moon was born.

8. Miss Piggy is apparently from Iowa. She started as a minor character on "The Muppet Show," but anyone who knows Miss Piggy can see that she wouldn't settle for anything "minor." Her first TV appearance was actually on an Herb Alpert special. It wasn't until 1976, when "The Muppet Show" premiered, that she became the glamorous blonde with a penchant for frog that we know and love today. Frank Oz once said that Miss Piggy grew up in Iowa; her dad died when she was young and her mother was mean. She had to enter beauty contests to make money.

9. Rowlf the Dog, surprise, surprise, was first made in 1962 for a series of Purina Dog Chow commercials. He went on to claim fame as Jimmy Dean's sidekick on The Jimmy Dean Show and was on every single episode from 1963 to 1966. Jimmy Dean said Rowlf got about 2,000 letters from fans every week. He was considered for Sesame Street but ended up becoming a regular on "The Muppet Show" in 1976. Mental Floss: Commercials from a late-80s airing of 'A Muppet Family Christmas'

10. Oscar the Grouch is performed by the same guy who does Big Bird, Carroll Spinney. Spinney said he based Oscar's cranky voice on a particular New York cab driver he once had the pleasure of riding with. He was originally an alarming shade of orange. In Pakistan, his name is Akhtar and he lives in an oil barrel. In Turkey, he is Kirpik and lives in a basket. And in Israel, it's not Oscar at all – it's his cousin, Moishe Oofnik, who lives in an old car.

11. Gonzo: What exactly is Gonzo? Nobody knows. Even Jim Henson had no particular species in mind. Over the course of "The Muppet Show," "Muppet Babies" and various Muppet movies, Gonzo has been referred to as a "Whatever", a "Weirdo" and an alien. Whatever he is, he first appeared on the scene in 1970's The Great Santa Claus Switch. His name was Snarl the Cigar Box Frackle. In 1974, he showed up on a TV special for Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass. He became Gonzo the Great by the first season of The Muppet Show and developed his thing

for Camilla the Chicken almost accidentally: During one episode where chickens were auditioning for the show, puppeteer Dave Goetz ad-libbed, "Don't call us, we'll call you... nice legs, though!" It was decided then and there that Gonzo would have a bizarre romantic interest in chickens.

12. You have to love Statler and Waldorf. I couldn't find much on their particular inspiration, but I can tell you that they've been around since the 1975 "Muppet Show" pilot. They are named after popular New York City hotels (the Statler Hotel was renamed the Hotel Pennsylvania in 1992.) Guess what Waldorf's wife name is? Yep... Astoria (she looks startlingly like Statler.) FYI, Waldorf is the one with the mustache and white hair. Statler has the grey hair. Apparently Waldorf has had a pacemaker for more than 30 years.

13. Beaker: I always thought of Beaker and his buddy Bunsen Honeydew as characters that came along later in the Muppet timeline, but they have been around since the "The Muppet Show." Although Beaker usually says things along the lines of, "Mee-mee-mee-mee!", he has had a few actual lines: "Sadly temporary," "Bye-Bye" and "Make-up ready!" Despite being word-challenged, he manages to do a pretty convincing Little Richard impression and, surprisingly, had mad beatbox skills. Beaker is one of the only Muppets that was never recycled from some other purpose – he was created solely for "The Muppet Show."

14. Fozzie Bear. Poor Fozzie. He's the perpetual target of Statler and Waldorf because of his horrible jokes and puns. It actually created a bit of a problem during the first season of The Muppet Show, because when Fozzie got heckled, he got very upset and sometimes cried. Viewers didn't feel sympathy; they felt embarrassed. The problem was solved by making Fozzie an optimist so that even when he got heckled he was good-natured about it. It's often thought that he was named after Frank Oz, who was his puppeteer, but Frank said it's just a variant of "fuzzy bear." Yet another story says he was named for his

builder, Faz Fazakas. Wocka wocka!!

15. Bert and Ernie are the Muppet version of Felix and Oscar ("The Odd Couple," for you young'uns). Lots of people think Bert and Ernie were named for some minor characters in *It's A Wonderful Life*, but according to the Henson company, that's just a rumor. Jim Henson always maintained that it was just a coincidence – the names just went well together and seemed to fit the characters. Jerry Juhl, one of the head writers, corroborated this and said that Jim Henson had no memory for details like that and would have never remembered the name of the cop and the taxi cab driver in the old Jimmy Stewart movie. Other rumors to clear up: Bert and Ernie aren't gay and neither one of them are dead. Now that we've got that straightened out, here are a few more tidbits: the original Ernie used to have a gravelly voice similar to Rowlf the Dog's. Frank Oz was Bert's puppeteer and hated him at the beginning. He thought Bert was ridiculously boring, but then realized that he could have a lot of fun with being boring. Jim Henson once said, "I remember trying Bert and Frank tried Ernie for a while. I can't imagine doing Bert now, because Bert has become so much of a part of Frank."

16. Grover: Everyone's favorite "cute, furry little monster" made his TV debut on the "Ed Sullivan Show" in 1967. At the time, he was known as "Gleep" and was a monster in Santa's Workshop. He then appeared on the first season of *Sesame Street*, but sported green fur and a reddish-orange nose. He didn't have a name then, but by the second season he transformed into the Grover we know today, more or less – electric blue fur and a pink nose. The original green Grover was reincarnated as Grover's Mommy for a few episodes. In Latin America and Puerto Rico Grover is known as Archibaldo, in Spain he is Coco, in Portugal he is Gualter and in Norway he is Gunnar.

17. Sweetums is one of a handful of full-body Muppets. He showed up in 1971 on the TV special "The Frog Prince." This is

where he got his name – when Sir Robin the Brave is about to defeat the ogre, a witch shows up and changes him into a frog (who later becomes Robin, Kermit's nephew). Apparently smitten with the ogre, the witch tells her darling "Sweetums" that he can have the frog for breakfast. Bigger fame awaited Sweetums, though – in 1975, he appeared on Cher's variety show to do a duet with her to "That Old Black Magic". He officially joined "The Muppet Show" cast in 1976.

18. Rizzo the Rat might sound familiar to you, especially if you've seen "Midnight Cowboy" – he is named for Dustin Hoffman's character, Ratso Rizzo. He was created after puppeteer Steve Whitmire was inspired by rat puppets made from bottles. He first showed up on "The Muppet Show" as one of a group of rats following Christopher Reeve around – he's easy to spot because he hams it up more than any of the other rats. He occasionally performs with Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem.

19. Pepe the King Prawn's full name is Pepino Rodrigo Serrano Gonzales. I heart Pepe. He was a chef in Madrid before going Hollywood on "Muppets Tonight" in 1996. He was paired with Seymour the Elephant (Pepe was originally going to be a mouse) on the show, but Seymour never developed quite the same following and was only in two episodes. He rarely gets names right – some of his mispronunciations include "muffins" instead of Muppets, "Kermin" instead of Kermit and "Scooper" instead of Scooter. He's quite full of himself – in addition to thinking that he's quite the ladies' man, he also fully expects to win several Oscars.

20. Herry Monster from Sesame Street was the Big Bad Wolf in his original incarnation, which you can kind of tell by looking at his fur. It's pretty wolf-like (if wolves were blue, I mean). He became a Sesame monster in 1970 to replace the Beautiful Day Monster, who looked kind of like Sam the Eagle and existed to cause destruction wherever he went, thus ruining the beautiful day people had been having before he

showed up. Herry used to have a furry nose but got upgraded to his non-furry, purple nose in 1971.

The preceding article was written by Stacy Conradt and was published on cnn.com

[poll id="9"]

And for your enjoyment (and so you can get this song stuck in your head for days on end), here is the Muppets catchy performance of Mahna Mahna – it's a really fun video to watch!

Ryan Started The Fire

In lieu of a new Office episode tonight (another rerun, GROAN!), I'll supply the following youtube.com Office video, "Ryan Started the Fire" for you to watch. I read about it in a suburban Chicago newspaper who featured the story because the video was made by some local high school students. It's well-written, nicely sung (good Billy Joel impression), and very well edited. The video was featured on Jenna Fisher's blog (the actress who plays Pam Beesley), and I can see why even a celebrity such as herself took notice – it's a great tribute to my favorite show! Before you enjoy it, however, I should warn you that it contains events that took place in the series in the current season, so SPOILER ALERT! If you don't want to know the current happenings in The Office, I guess you'll have to wait to see this video! Otherwise, ENJOY!

It's THAT Time Of Year!

Shortly after this blog post is published, the countdown timer on my site will change – but that's a great thing. It used to count down until the [Chicago Cubs](#)' first game of 2009 Spring Training, but since that game is TODAY (!) that countdown timer will soon be edited to count down until the first real SEASON Cubs game of 2009 – YIPPEE! So here's to hoping the Cubs win today (and every day!), even though it's just spring training!

Now I have to go see if I can find the first game of spring training on a tv channel in the rural expanse of Northwest Ohio! GO CUBBIES!!!

Too Punny!

I received an email forward full of “Creative Puns for Educated Minds”. Some of them are really cute, so I decided to publish them here on the blog. While reading these, you **will** groan at least once, but if you don't smile or even laugh out loud, you might be a little bit crabby and should probably take a nap instead of reading the rest of the 22 puns below.

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class

because it was a weapon of math disruption.

5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.

6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.

9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

11. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.

12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, 'You stay here; I'll go on a head.'

14. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.

15. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'

16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital. When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse said, 'No change yet.'

17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

18. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.

19. The man who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

20. A backward poet writes inverse.

21. In democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.

22. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.